



Samantha Stone

B2B Marketing Strategy

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0:03 It's Peter Wright and Kathleen Beauvais in Ontario Canada with another excellent episode of the Yakking show exclusively for our premium members.

0:13 These are the episodes where we bring you really successful business people to give you actionable tips and ideas to move your business and your life forward in ways you might not find anywhere else on the internet.

0:23 So first let's introduce co host Kathleen from Waterloo Ontario.

0:28 Hi Kathleen, how are you today?

0:29 I'm doing great, Peter, thank you and thank you all so very much for tuning into our show.

0:34 You know Peter we have the great privilege as you said of interviewing people for literally all over the world that are experts in their fields for our premium members and today of course is no exception.

0:49 We have the great pleasure of welcoming Samantha Stone to the show.

0:54 Hello Samantha.

0:55 Welcome.

0:56 How are you?

0:57 Thank you.

0:58 It's wonderful to be speaking with you.

1:00 Thank you.

1:02 Samantha is an author and a fast-growth B2B marketing strategist, researcher, speaker and consultant and the founder of the marketing advisory network.

1:15 So Samantha, before we get started and delve into these wonderful topics.

1:19 Can you please for our audience?

1:21 Give us a little bit about your background and what led you to help companies develop effective marketing strategies.

1:28 This might be a longer answer than you intended.

1:31 So we'll give you the short version.

1:34 I was I actually graduated college with a degree in economics and I had full intentions of going into public policy research until I actually did a project working for a government agency.

1:47 And I learned something very true about myself that I am way too impatient to do public policy research while my spirit and intentions are good and I do love research very much, you know, to enact a change from a policy perspective is many, many years for all the right good reasons and it is not in my body to be able to do that.

2:09 And so I thought, I don't know what I'm going to do now, but I applied to graduate school because that's what you do when you don't know what you're gonna do.

2:16 But you know, I needed to work in the meantime, in the very first job that I got through a temp agency was at a technology company.

2:25 Never in a million years would have seen myself in that field.

2:28 And I ended up in the short version of the story working for this technology company, falling in love with the fast-paced nature of what we were doing and I did channel sales for a number of years.

2:39 And at one point I started doing my own marketing because I was impatient as I've shared.

2:45 And there were things that I needed that the direct marketing corporate marketing team wasn't able to do for our partners.

2:52 And I'd like to think that I was helpful enough, but maybe pushing enough might be a more accurate description that at one point somebody says, fine Samantha, you can do this product log in and why don't you own it.

3:04 And that's when I transitioned to marketing and I realized that I truly loved it so much more.

3:10 I was good at sales, but I just absolutely loved the ability to impact things at a greater scale than a set of accounts.

3:18 But also that it was really hard.

3:20 And so the combination of challenge was fantastic.

3:23 So I like to think that a degree in economics taught me sort of analytical thinking and data-driven decision-making.

3:29 My sales background may be very sensitive to buyers and sales processes and and those types of things.

3:36 And then I learned marketing skills, you know, sort of by doing and eventually took some formal training in it as well.

3:42 And the combination I think has what has made me good at what I do and 10 years ago I decided that I loved my work, but I had become very senior and some bigger organizations and I missed doing the day-to-day work.

3:59 I was spending most of my time sort of internally politicking.

4:02 So I founded the Marketing Advisory Network to get back to the work that I loved and to be able to help multiple companies at the same time.

4:09 And that's what I've been doing for the last 10 years, wow, wow, very good, well done.

4:15 So we're gonna be talking about all sorts of aspects of marketing as we go through today.

4:21 But one thing that worries me and this is what I would like you to start off is coming out of three years, almost three years of totally disrupted society with the lockdown and towards the end of last year that the sudden, for many people, explosion of AI based software programs, if you want to call it, there's two huge disruptive forces together here and there's been casualties in many industries.

4:48 So where do we go from here?

4:51 So what's in, what's in front of us and how can you help businesses shift their strategy to cope with all that's going on really.

5:00 You know, all of that change and things makes me believe that, you know, we have to go back to our foundations, we got really caught up as marketers and sort of the next shiny object.

5:11 We get often caught around the cool campaign, the cool tool that I want to use, We need to go back to basics, what are we trying to achieve, who are we serving and how best we do that and there will be technology to help us achieve those goals of better serving our customers.

5:25 But it's not the driving force, none of us should be going in and saying we need an AI strategy or personalization strategy or what we need is a business strategy and marketing should be derived and the things we do in marketing should be derived from that.

5:40 So I think that's sort of number one and even if we've understood our businesses so much has changed in the last three years, we need to go back and continue to constantly do that kind of research and really understand our buyers and what's changed for them and how they prioritize and how they buy and to do a lot of things and we now have a whole bunch of new tools that frankly enterprises who have big budgets have been using for a long time.

6:05 These are not actually new technologies which, is that the average person, me, you my uncle, you know my best friend are starting to talk about AI text generation and content generations like and it's like all this brand new thing is unveiled.

6:21 Well you know there are people who have been using it for a decade now right?

6:2 And so the good news is we know what doesn't work and not to use it and we have models about how to use these things to advance ourselves.

6:35 And the thing is to be open to how and where to apply it.

6:39 I have been studying artificial intelligence for a number of years and its application to business and marketing strategy.

6:46 I did some primary research right before the pandemic and then I redid the research after we got a couple years into it because I knew that things had shifted and the research I was doing was to better understand when do I use artificial intelligence interacting with customers.

7:02 And and the thing that came through most clearly in this research is that in routine tasks I want to know when you're open.

7:11 I want to look up my account, how much does something cost?

7:15 I want to configure some things like chat bots

7:23 Right?

7:24 We don't always want to talk to a person.

7:26 It's those are good things.

7:27 I can use this technology to build personalized, maybe a demo I want to present to someone all good in moments of frustration or concern interacting with an automated system is the absolute wrong thing to do.

7:43 I don't want to know what hours the bank is open.

7:44 Somebody took \$500 out of my account and I don't actually know who that is.

7:48 I want to talk to a human to solve it.

7:50 And that research was very, very clear every time I've gone out and talked to the hunt actually talk to almost 1000 consumers to get that information fed to us.

8:00 I did two surveys, one before pandemic hit and one after and actually it was wildly consist in this regard.

8:08 And so that shows us that we need to use technology to make things easier to make things more effective to be cleaner but we can't lose the human component in certain parts of our process.

8:24 The other thing the data told us very clearly was that we need to be transparent if someone thinks you know sometimes you go on and it's very clear I'm talking to a chatbot

for example and other times we use a name or a picture and they're trying to pretend it's a person that's all well and good until something goes wrong when something went bad.

8:44 One of the things we did this research is I put two, I put a very, very frustrating chat experience script in front of all these people, so it was purposely a bad one that didn't have a happy conclusion and I showed it to people in three ways.

9:00 One group of people got the analysis that showed a person's picture and a real person's name, the second name, but no picture and the first one got a name like chatbots, right?

9:11 So it was very clear that that was I mean people scored who am I willing to work with this brand or this company again Right, much, much higher when it was clearly transparent was a chat bot because they were willing to accept this bot didn't understand me, I didn't get what I wanted, but that's okay.

9:33 These systems don't always work when we pretended it was a person, same exact experience, their likelihood to do business with that company plummeted, it just dropped 20 percent big difference. Interesting and that is very interesting.

9:50 Yeah, so the other big area that you're researching is shifting bio trends which have been shifting and always will continue to shift obviously.

10:00 So let's look at that in the B2B sphere a little bit more.

10:05 Yeah, there are so many things that we could talk about, but there's three there's really three big ones that I think are really important for us.

10:12 Well, there's 4, one of which we've been talking about, which is this, this notion about trust inherently.

10:18 We're operating in a place of distrust, even if were the most trustworthy company, we keep all of our promises, our buyers, the world, the context they're living in is to distrust things.

10:29 And so how we use technology transparently and where and when we use it is a really critical piece that we need to address.

10:37 An equally relevant piece of this puzzle is around digital e commerce for B two B buying, right?

10:46 Even for complex buying people are expecting consumer like shopping experiences.

10:52 Even when I'm buying a \$50,000 software package for my company.

10:57 And it has big implications for how we in our business, create our websites and where we use our sales people and how we do things like take orders or share information or give away, show us case pricing and things like that.

11:13 So this need to have these digital commerce is across all spectrums of products and services is a really new phenomena, in in many of the kinds of organizations that are that are out there, we never, we buy cars now right without ever, we're going to a dealer and without ever test driving that, that car, you could just possible people do it all the time every day.

11:37 Now.

11:38 It really shifts how we think about what complex selling processes are all about.

11:43 So that's a, that's a really big one.

11:47 And I think, let me give you an example of an organization that really just dropped the ball on this with me recently.

11:54 So I have been using, I won't shame them so I won't name who they are.

11:59 But I've been using an e signature tool, to do contract execution for most of my business and I'm a relatively small business by design in an, in an intention.

12:14 And so I have a, you know, not a high volume of contracts, it's literally for signatures, I don't use 90% plus of the functionality of this tool, but I have found it a convenience and easy for my customers and so I use it and my renewal is coming up and they're significantly increasing the price of the service that I bought for them for many years.

12:35 It's gone up a little bit before.

12:36 But this is a pretty big jump.

12:38 Well, this company did something smart, They looked at the volume and the functionality that they use and they said, oh, she's not gonna like this.

12:46 And so they sent me proactively a communication that says, hey, we're raising our prices to this.

12:51 It's a significant jump, but we have a starter pack that we think is going to better use your better match for you so far.

12:59 They're doing great.

13:01 So I reply to that email solicitation, I say awesome.

13:05 What's the price of the starter pack?

13:06 I'm sure it does what I need.

13:07 I only need these two things and the salesperson says, let me set up a meeting.

13:11 I said, I don't need a meeting.

13:13 I just need the price.

13:15 So would not set up a meeting.

13:17 Wouldn't give me any information without, wouldn't confirm the functionality, wouldn't any of these, you know, I'm a longtime customer with very clear needs and it's very clear to me what happened.

13:27 They have this outbound sales person whose entire focused pay structure is on getting a meeting versus getting a renewal.

13:36 If, if they had incentive to get the renewal, they have my business today instead, after many attempts, what I have done is I turned off my auto renew and I'm not gonna use the service anymore because you know what, it was convenient, but it wasn't necessary, you know, hugely necessary to me and there's many alternatives that are easier.

13:54 So this company failed to recognize the shift in how I want this buying experience and probably way back in the day, I probably did talk to a sales person and had a bunch of questions, don't do that anymore, right?

14:08 And so that's the kind of thing I'm talk I was looking at and examining how do our buyers buy things from us and how do they want to buy things from us and how do we close the gap between what we want to do and what they want from us?

14:22 Because there's no reason that poor brian outbound calling team spent a lot of time chasing me.

14:30 That's right.

14:31 We could have had a renewal with just an email.

14:33 That's all we needed right now.

14:36 I'd like to get your opinion on something very similar to that.

14:40 Sorry, Kathleen.

14:40 I'm gonna jump in before I forget this one that I've, I've had several instances recently of service providers where I phoned them one was my mobile phone and internet provider and I phoned to ask why there was a certain charge.

14:55 And they then said to me, we can actually give you a new package that will save you money.

15:01 And it's obviously a package designed to entice new brand new customers coming in and it was fairly significant saving.

15:08 And I thought, well if I hadn't phoned you would have kept on charging me what you were.

15:12 So how do companies solve the dilemma of advertising or offering attractive passages packages for new customers without upsetting their existing customers.

15:25 They stopped doing that just doing it.

15:29 It's a technique that we have used because we understand, but if there's too much transparency in the world today, there is the only way I knew what the price of my cable company was, for example, right was an ad or conversation on the phone.

15:44 It's impossible to hide that right now.

15:47 So there's no way to do what you're describing without feeding people.

15:51 So what they need to do is optimize their pricing model for profitability.

15:57 That is different, necessarily optimizing for new customer acquisition.

16:01 And so they need, you need to rethink how we think about pricing.

16:06 This is this is a great example.

16:07 I'm so glad you brought it because it's a perfect example of what I'm talking about is rethinking the commerce experience that we create for our customers with what people are expecting today.

16:19 You cannot hide this information and it's not just that my neighbor across the street might have a better deal and tell me I now I'm gonna get to see it, I'm gonna google on the website and I'm going to see it Right.

16:30 It's just something we have to, we have to stop doing and instead think about what that right balance is customer retention, right is a revenue stream that we traditionally in marketing haven't spent enough time on.

16:44 We spend most of my clients, this is an unscientific data point, but my clients spend 95% of their resources and marketing a new customer acquisition.

16:54 That's it.

16:56 Yet.

16:57 If you look at their actual revenue stream, it's much closer to 50, 60 or 70% is current customers.

17:04 And yes, you don't have to work as hard necessarily to keep a customer as to get a new one in.

17:11 And so there's different things that you need to do, but our focus is completely skewed too far in one direction and we need, if I believe that there are exceptions to this rule.

17:24 But for all, almost all of us, we want to build profitable business is not just a business, it's not just about getting to a number of customers.

17:32 It's about making money and money might not be that maybe your nonprofit, it's about fundraising too good cause I mean, you know, it could be maybe your government agency and making money means serving my community in the most cost effective way, whatever that sort of core value is.

17:48 And so we have to rethink how we approach serving our audiences in this context.

17:56 The biggest and we've seen this, the reason there are tens of thousands of people being laid off in the tech sector today is because we over hired.

18:05 We that there's no other way these companies can continue to operate with very little disruption to their customer base as they are today, except that they over hired.

18:15 And so we see that even at small scale, we see smaller companies say, well, I wanna do three times revenue growth.

18:23 So I'm gonna hire if one sales piece, I'm not gonna have three sales people.

18:28 So we think that, you know, that's the math we have to do but it's a flawed of approach and it isn't matched to how our customers are buying things today.

18:37 And the ways that we can reach out and build those rapport and those relationships.

18:43 So with all the changes that we've been discussing, are there some industries that are likely to disappear altogether?

18:51 That's a really good question.

18:53 I'm sure there are, I'm sure eventually things change.

18:57 I think the way I think it is how things will adapt and be different.

19:02 So for example my when my parents, my grandparents' generation worked literally for the same company their entire career and they that they or the majority of their career and then they retired a part-time job doing.

19:17 My parents in their generation worked the same job for different companies over their career are my Children will have multiple careers.

19:30 They will do different work for different companies over the course of their lifetime.

19:37 And I think that that is not because whole industry and occasionally a whole industry is gonna go away but it's more that the task at hand to do and that job is going to change quite substantially.

19:49 I think we've seen this a lot and things like bookkeeping and accounting, we've already seen this right with the rapid adoption of things like Quickbooks and other systems and tax preparation things a lot of the work of what was a bookkeeper and accountant is is really I can go in and I plug in forms now.

20:05 Right.

20:05 And I get that data because that thing and bookkeeping have no role.

20:09 Of course not.

20:09 It means that their role is different.

20:12 The work that they do is different how they serve their customers is different are certain specific jobs in accounting and bookkeeping gone.

20:20 Yeah probably or if not now will be eventually but there so I think of it more as an evolution than of a you know sort of elimination of of work.

20:33 Here's an interesting one that there's some categories you were talking about e commerce in the B2B world.

20:40 Part of my background was farming.

20:43 My first job out of school was with my father's farm and then I farmed on my own for many years in Africa and I'm connected with quite a few farmers here in Ontario.

20:53 And I was talking to a dairy farmer the other day and okay he's young, he's mid thirties, early to mid thirties and he's caught up on this whole E commerce thing and he was saying you know we don't get many sales reps coming around anymore.

21:05 He says I'll get a sales rep trying to sell me something new but once I'm a customer I just get on the internet, order the stuff myself and pay with my credit card and it gets delivered so I don't need a sales rep so I would imagine some of those agricultural and perhaps other industrial sales reps jobs are in some sort of danger because there's not a lot of need for them.

21:26 Yeah, not a lot of need for what they used to do.

21:29 So is there a need for them to introduce new products that compete with a current perhaps is there a need for them to teach people how to use their product initially?

21:41 Perhaps.

21:41 So yeah, the task that they used to do the, you know, running around what I won't do it, I won't show you the dying plant that's like over here now because it's a little embarrassing given agriculture and farming.

21:55 I do not have a green thumb at all.

21:57 It's a little miracle that that plan is alive there.

22:00 It is real, but it thrives on almost no attention.

22:05 So, so yeah, so that's a good another example to me where it's not that salespeople who serve farmers and agriculture don't need to exist.

22:13 It's the work that those people do now is completely different than the work that they used to do before.

22:20 But by the other side of that coin is a whole lot of new job categories have emerged in agriculture.

22:26 We now have drone operators, right, scanning farmer's fields for the health of the crops, even taking samples and analyzing the soil by drone 2015, 20 years ago there was no such thing as a drone operator in agriculture.

22:40 Right.

22:40 So I have solar put on my office here and when they did that the a drone and satellite picture, I don't even think of drone, I think just satellite pictures designed, my system told me was able to build the pricing configuration for me, told me how much power I would be able to consume based on the light in the locations and all the things that go, you know, this complex formula I don't understand, right?

23:04 And then a salesperson stepped me through the installation process because you got to connect an electric company.

23:11 There's a whole bunch of people who show up at your house to do things.

23:14 So the salesperson didn't need to do the pricing work.

23:17 I'm sure they used to have to do all that stuff manually, but now they had to do work to help me be comfortable with the changes to my roof of my house.

23:25 How many people are going to show up in my yard.

23:27 Right.

23:28 So I think similarly we're seeing that happen over and over and over again in so many places.

23:35 Yeah, So let's go in a slightly different direction.

23:39 All three of us are members of a very, I think unique community on a platform called Discord which has its frustrations, discord not the, not the people we talked to.

23:49 I find that a treasure trove of information, wisdom and ideas from people like yourself and Mark and a number of others.

23:56 And we're getting a lot of benefit.

23:58 One of the big topics that we're discussing in there is community driven marketing now, that's obviously more applicable in the consumer market than the industrial market or business market, but I think there's parallels that are important for the business market.

24:13 What's your thoughts on that Samantha?

24:15 Yeah, I think community is everything right?

24:18 I really sort of fundamentally believe that. I was on the discord channel and my son walks by, he's like, are you on a discord mom?

24:26 He saw the icon and I am he's like, what are you doing?

24:28 Because he uses it for gaming and does, you know, sort of online.

24:31 So it was kind of a fun conversation and then I explained what I was doing, you know, and what that community was all about.

24:38 And it has community has a fundamental role in building belonging, right?

24:44 You know, Mark Schaefer has this great book that he's just published belonging to the brand, and it is exactly the right way of thinking about this, which is yes, sometimes customers just buy stuff from us, right?

24:54 And they just do and that's totally fine.

24:56 And I love when people just buy things for me, right.

24:59 People sometimes find my book, I had nothing really to do with helping them find the book, I got lucky.

25:03 Maybe somebody recommended it.

25:04 So that's wonderful.

25:05 But if I really want them to build a relationship with me with my company with my brand, they need to feel a part of something right?

25:14 And buying something does not make me feel like a part of something, right?

25:18 And so we if we really want to differentiate ourselves, if we really want to change and adapt with our customers, change is going to happen.

25:29 Do I want my customers to stick with me and change with me and we change with them.

25:33 We've got to build those bonds in those communities and those connections and that means letting go in a way that is often hard, right?

25:41 Because, you know, one of the things Mark has told us right, is that he thought he set up a bunch of communication channels that he thought were topics we were going to end up talking about and some of those ended up being the least active right channels, But a

whole bunch of things we hadn't even thought about popped up where it is a really fabulous, high-quality conversation and lots of people are building connections, were building connections with each other, but also with him, right?

26:08 And sort of overall mission of rise.

26:12 And and I think that that is what most of us have to do in our business.

26:17 And we've talked about community and marketing for a long time, but we haven't, most of us haven't really lived it, Most of us are not doing this today.

26:29 And I think that we are going to need to do it more and more and more as things continue to change and evolve and you know, when you think about it, it's not new.

26:39 If I think back 40 50 years when as I said, I was a farmer when I first left school and in the little village I lived in, in Africa, we had a cattle sale once a month or so and all our cull cows went there and the farmers would all sit around afterwards having a beer and they would say, well which vet are you're using where do you buy your cattle dip from?

27:00 And it was within that community, if someone said, well that car is good, if you want this, go and talk to him, people did, right.

27:05 So it's something that I think we used to have to buy things in person, right?

27:10 We used to buy things with a phone call and the more digital the buying becomes, the more important that the community becomes because the accidentally come across people in that world.

27:20 So how do you, how do we bring them together digitally to do that?

27:25 I mean, you know, offline doesn't have a role.

27:27 It certainly does for many things and community can have a non-digital component, but the digital piece of it is just fundamental and required today, where it wasn't certainly not 20 years ago.

27:39 Very little digital community work and we have the technology to build a digital community.

27:43 We just didn't need one we didn't you?

27:48 I'm monopolizing Samantha's time here.

27:52 So Samantha maybe you can talk to us a little bit more about the B two B marketing strategies and how you're helping, how you help your clients with working out what strategy they need in order to expand their businesses.

28:10 Yeah, we do.

28:11 I do a lot of different kinds of work for different organizations that are in different stages.

28:15 What I what I typically work with the companies who have, sometimes I work with startups who are launching for the first time and we can talk about product launch but that's that's own entity and its own beast, right?

28:24 It's its own thing.

28:25 Most of the time I'm working with companies who have an established business but they've hit a plateau, they're growing, they've grown, but they've kind of gotten stagnant, they can't get past the stage that they're at.

28:37 And we're trying to figure out why like what is getting in the way of us getting to the next phase of our business, whether that's opening a new location or growing revenue or becoming more profitable.

28:47 A lot of times companies are grow and they have reasonable revenue but they're not very profitable.

28:53 And so sometimes we're looking at how do we become more profitable as as the goal within the current footprint of the business and a lot of the things that we're doing is doing this work is where is the friction in the buying process and how do we remove the friction from the buying process?

29:09 And we often businesses often think about marketing, does this, you know, set of things and we have sales and then we have service, but our buyers don't look at it that way, they look at the whole spectrum of the interaction.

29:20 So how do we map that whole spectrum and how do we see where our people stuck today?

29:25 Where do we annoy people?

29:26 Is kind of where I usually start, where we frustratingly, where are they beating their heads saying that's a good product, but they're driving me crazy, right?

29:34 And how do we fix that?

29:36 What products are doing really well, what products are failing right?

29:39 Sometimes it's just not a good fit for the market and that's okay, okay, you remove that from our portfolio.

29:45 Sometimes it's a really great product that people don't understand or has been packaged wrong.

29:49 Sometimes it's a really good offering, but people use it differently than we intended.

29:54 And so we've got to sort of adapt around it.

29:57 And so we spend a lot of time understanding what are you good at?

30:02 Where was those friction points exist?

30:04 And how do we eliminate that friction points to make sure that we're creating the best most useful experience.

30:13 And then that, you know that strategy then becomes okay, now I really got a tight audience, a tight message, a tight offer.

30:21 Now we can start talking about what campaigns might I run right, where, where might I advertise what, you know, where am I going to build my community?

30:28 It's one thing to know.

30:28 I want a community figure out where I'm gonna build, it might be something different, right?

30:33 What has really worked for us in the past and what can we let go of?

30:39 Right, Maybe it used to work, but it doesn't work anymore.

30:41 Well, I had that conversation today with a client who was really having a hard time letting go of a particular program.

30:49 In this case, they are actually a nonprofit organization and, they have a bunch of really great things that they do.

30:56 And one of the things that they do every year, which is really fun is they run this concert series and in our local community, their nonprofit is all about community building and coming together.

31:06 But I said that we went through all this tonight and it just didn't, one thing didn't feel like the other, right.

31:11 So I said, why do you do that?

31:14 And they had an answer.

31:16 And I said that made sense.

31:18 But the parameters, the reason they did it initially no longer exists later.

31:24 And so it's really hard to let go of that.

31:27 So I said, okay, you emotionally don't want to let go of this.

31:30 And that's okay.

31:30 Sometimes that's, you know, a criteria.

31:33 But how are you going to turn it into something that is valuable to the organization because right now it's a really cool thing.

31:39 That's nice to do, but it doesn't serve your actual mission.

31:42 So how do we turn it into a fundraiser or how do we turn it into something else?

31:47 Right.

31:47 And, and those are the conversations all of us need to have all the time with our businesses is what has changed about us or our buyers or the competition.

31:57 And how do we adjust our strategies to be more aligned with where the market is today?

32:04 And that means, you know, those five years plans that we all learned how to build, you know, feel free to build one if it makes you feel good?

32:12 I believe in five year goals, but how you're going to get there?

32:15 There's no way that anything I put on paper today is actually going to do what I'm doing in five years from now.

32:21 And so instead how do we build adaptable structure and process and policy and measurement in how we operate right now over the next six months.

32:31 So can we, can we turn our focus for a moment to promoting promotion.

32:38 How would you advise a company that, you know, they may be doing well, but they can always do better and they're trying to figure out the best way to promote themselves.

32:49 I mean, is it our company is still blocking to social media?

32:55 Is it something else?

32:58 What would you advise?

33:02 It's a really good question.

33:03 I think I do believe in sort of a multi-channel approach.

33:07 I think that typically works best.

33:08 So I don't think there's like a single thing.

33:10 If you advertise here, all of your growth needs will be met.

33:13 I think that's very unlikely for most organizations.

33:16 So I do think it takes multiple things, but I'll tell you the most underutilized tool and a bag of tricks is word of mouth and referral activity.

33:27 Almost any business I have ever met could have significant growth through better, more structured advocacy referral and sort of word-of-mouth initiatives.

33:37 Jay Baer has a great book talk triggers that talks about how do you not just deliver what you do, but deliver it in a way that makes people talk about it, right?

33:46 And we, in all kinds of businesses highly, highly underutilize that mechanism.

33:56 Sorry, Kathleen, can I jump in with two quick points before I forget. I was having a twitter chat or a private message with someone I hadn't been in contact with for many years because I had read something on her blog and noticed she was an affiliate for a hosting company and I'm having a bit of a hassle with the company that I used for hosting and she replied, I'm also won't shame them by naming them and she said there, okay, my irritation level with them has not overcome my inertia of changing.

34:28 And I thought that should be framed and put on the wall of most companies because it's so true that we put up with all sorts of stuff and then suddenly it overcomes the Inertia of Changing.

34:39 So and I think a lot of companies are guilty of that.

34:42 What I was going to tell you as far as word of mouth goes is that with my farming background?

34:47 When I came to Canada, my wife bought me, I had horses and do a lot of stuff outside.

34:52 She brought me a thing called a leather man.

34:54 If you've got any farming connections or handyman, you know, it's a little tool, you carry on your belt with the whole deal and it comes with a lifetime guarantee.

35:02 And I had that thing for 15 years and I broke the screwdriver blade, my fault.

35:06 So I emailed Leatherman and said, you know I've broken the blade, can you send me another one and I'll fix it?

35:10 They said no, no, we fix it in our workshop.

35:12 You'll have to pay the postage to get it to our depot in Canada.

35:15 And not to the USA, and they will send it to our base.

35:19 And I think they're in Washington Oregon somewhere on the west coast and we will send it back to you.

35:24 And sure enough they sent it back to me and no charge.

35:27 Right.

35:27 And this is an item that may be cost \$40.15 years ago they replaced it.

35:33 Sent it back no charge, beautifully cleaned and polished the knife sharpened and then checked with another follow up email and said did it arrive safely?

35:39 And are you happy with that?

35:41 Wow.

35:41 You know that sort of service for that low item is that's really stuck in my mind.

35:46 So if anyone says to me what do you think you about Leatherman?

35:49 I'll say they're one of the best you can get?

35:52 It's very true and that's the thing about it.

35:55 It wasn't just that they fixed your screwdriver and sent it to you right, they polished it.

36:00 They sharpened the knife right?

36:02 They created the experience around it to be truly remarkable.

36:06 And to exceed expectations.

36:08 The fact when we exceed in some way right?

36:12 In in some way that's what gets people talking and we don't spend enough time looking for those opportunities.

36:18 So yes we do need to advertise sure there's value in advertising, there's value in social media, there's value in PR there's value in all kinds of channels.

36:28 But what unless you have something for people to talk about and the way you deliver, those investments are not well spent.

36:37 And so what those investments should be amplifying is not your lead.

36:42 They're not the thing that's gonna make you successful.

36:44 They should amplify your success and we need to take that step back and start first.

36:50 You know, people start with, I need to buy a marketing automation system, right?

36:54 And I need, okay, that's a useful tool.

36:57 What are you going to send people?

36:58 What are the offers that are going to be there?

37:00 Right.

37:01 And so you have things to feed the engine and remarkable experiences.

37:08 It's, it's, you'll get an initial bump because doing something is always better than doing nothing.

37:12 But you will hit a wall really fast where you don't get incrementally, you just get incrementally better.

37:18 You don't make another step and another leap unless you take that step back and think about those remarkable things about you that your customers are gonna value like Leatherman did with you in that experience.

37:30 I do know, my husband and son are in construction so not in.

37:33 Okay.

37:34 So I thought you were smiling.

37:35 You know what I'm talking about?

37:36 Yeah, they definitely we care a lot about tools in my house and a lot of tools in my house.

37:42 Another one on that is equally good if not perhaps even better is SnapOn.

37:48 My brother was a diesel mechanic had his own workshop and he brought Snap On tools in Rhodesia, which it was called like 30 years ago and then he moved to England and he had a socket from a set that was broken and the Snap On man came around and he said can you fix this it has lifetime guarantee.

38:03 There's a new one.

38:04 So they're, they're very good as well.

38:06 I want to get back to what you were talking about just now.

38:09 The way when Kathleen asked you, how do you work with companies?

38:12 I would say.

38:13 And I'd like your comment on this, that many of us in business.

38:19 I have a feeling that are struggling to grow your clients, that you're helping grow.

38:24 We have a feeling we need to do something, but because we're inside the business, we can't see it and it takes someone like yourself an outside facilitator to come in.

38:32, And let us see the wood for the trees for an old British saying so, so what's the first step?

38:39 How do you do that?

38:41 I am really a marketing therapist and my LinkedIn profile, which is oftentimes people even know what they should do, but they can't get the backing of the support to do it right.

38:52 Yeah, I mean, I think the first thing I do always, no matter what the, no matter what it is that the services, no matter what the obstacle is, is I spend time to understand two things, what their real goals are right, where they really trying to achieve And yes, there's a revenue number to it, but there's something beyond the revenue number that is driving the sort of mission of the business.

39:12 And then I understand that and I understand their customers by speaking terms and there's just, you know, data is super useful.

39:19 It helps point me in the right direction, but ultimately, you've got to observe customers and what they need and want and why and when I say customers, it may not be actual people have bought from them with the buying community that they want to attract.

39:32 So the very first thing is always that internally sort of letting people have that moment of catharsis, what do you already know?

39:41 Where are you stuck?

39:43 What are we trying to achieve and then get to know them and observing what the quick fix is.

39:49 Sometimes the answer is people don't like because sometimes the answer is you've been spending a lot of investment in this thing over here, it doesn't have a market or it has a market that's not attainable for you, you really should stop doing that.

40:01 And in other cases it's, you know, you have this product and it has five big capabilities and you've been talking about one in two capabilities because they were the hardest to build, right?

40:12 We do that a lot or the hardest to deliver.

40:14 But the thing that your customers care about is actually number three.

40:17 So let's talk more about number three, how do we prioritize messages and prioritize delivery.

40:23 So it really is just taking that pause that moment to try and really understand who, what are we trying to achieve for whom and what are those people care about to solve that.

40:37 And then, you know, and then there's some balancing of resources, right?

40:39 Some companies have very limited resources, some companies have very robust resources and that affects the strategies that I take what I'm trying to do and trying to grow but fundamentally starts first with understanding buyers and understanding goals.

40:56 Now, one of the things that I've observed, I'm curious to see if you've also observed this is I often brought in by a person, sometimes it's the president or CEO of a company or a founder, sometimes the head of marketing, sometimes the head of sales or revenue.

41:09 And they have told me a problem they're trying to solve, you know, that that is and then when I get the bigger, broader group of people together, I often find that they are not aligned around what they're trying to do and who they're trying to serve.

41:23 And so we often even take a step back to just get the team aligned around that and we dated to do that right?

41:30 We look at where do you actually make money?

41:33 Where is your, where is competition weakest?

41:35 What are you trying to achieve?

41:37 What would make you actually feel good aside from financial metrics?

41:40 You know, with these other things, you care deeply about where are you strong?

41:44 Where are you weak?

41:45 And try and rally around that.

41:47 And a good portion of some of the strategy work and planning work is around getting the team on the same page.

41:53 Oh yeah, I agree with you.

41:56 100%.

41:56 The real problem is very often not one that you asked to solve.

42:00 I'll tell you this little in and I think you both appreciate this.

42:03 One of my first consulting clients hired me with the explicit goal to double the number of leads that came into the company.

42:11 That was the goal.

42:11 And at that point in my practice, I guess I signed on for that.

42:16 I probably would handle the discussion a little bit different, but I signed on and I did what I always did.

42:20 Okay, fine, let's look at what you're doing.

42:22 And I did an audit.

42:23 And then I talked to buyers and I came back and I said, okay, we've got a plan of action.

42:27 And I sat down with the head of sales and the CEO who were the people who brought me in and I said, I have awesome news for you.

42:35 And they're like, oh yes, a man.

42:37 They were so excited to go, we are gonna cut your leads in half.

42:41 And they're like, What?

42:43 What?

42:44 And I said, we're going to cut your leads in half and the mouths dropped. To their credit.

42:49 They didn't kick me out of the room quite, and they were waiting for me to explain.

42:54 And what I explained to them is they didn't have a lead volume from, they had a lead quality problem.

42:58 We stepped through all the stuff that they were going through and what we're going to do, and we did exactly that?

43:02 We cut their leads in half.

43:03 We kept their budget identical in terms of financial resources and people resources that we were allocating and we grew revenue 25 percent in the next six months.

43:13 But if I did what they asked me to do, which was the problem, worse, the number of leads they would have been, it would have created a different problem.

43:22 It wouldn't have actually solved the business problem, which is, we're trying to grow our revenue and we're hitting a plateau.

43:27 We think they thought the solution was more leads.

43:31 Absolutely right.

43:33 And that's not uncommon either.

43:36 Not uncommon.

43:37 Here's, here's another one for you.

43:38 Do you find when you go into businesses major differences in perspective, depending on the generation of the, either the owner or the top management.

43:47 So if you have old boomers like me in charge of a business, do you find them generally facing a different set of problems if you have young people like yourself, or, or even, you know, very young entrepreneurs.

44:00 Is there a general generational disparity or was it pretty common across the board?

44:05 It's an excellent question.

44:06 I think, there are definitely generational preferences in how we communicate.

44:12 That is different and I think that is very real.

44:15 But I actually think the difference, I see more is less generation about who runs it, and it's more about the structure of the organization.

44:23 Is it a family-owned and operated business?

44:25 Is it a corporation that has a board?

44:30 You know, like how the company is structured makes a really big difference versus how old the person in charge is in my, you know, sort of my experience, that's been the bigger difference.

44:42 Okay, so, you know, when I introduced you, I mentioned that to the viewers that you're an author.

44:53 Can you tell us about the book that you've written?

44:57 Yeah, thank you for asking about it.

44:59 Unleashed possible.

45:00 It's a marketing playbook that drives sales is sort of the name of the book and it was really born out of all my work.

45:06 So when I first started doing my consulting practice, I was really fortunate.

45:10 I had a great network.

45:11 I grew that business pretty steadily, but I had a lot of people who couldn't afford to pay my consulting fees and, and I really did want to help them and I wanted to find it well, but I didn't want to just give my services a significant discount.

45:26 I'm a primary financial support for my family and that's fine, stability was important to me and I didn't want to do that.

45:33 So what I did was write this book as a way that I could help people and in a completely different way.

45:41 I'm not gonna lie.

45:42 My sister published a book right before me.

45:44 So there was a little Austin motivation of, I want to get that was definitely there.

45:49 But it was really remarkable, so I started doing it to serve people that I couldn't serve through the traditional way, but I actually served me very well.

45:58 So while the book was based on a lot of things that I had already published and written as a starting point, it forced me to get really clear about what I believed about an approach and why, because I had to write it down in a book format, which is different than other formats.

46:12 And so I wrote the book to be really a handbook.

46:17 It's you know, it's designed to be very prescriptive in the kinds of things that you can do.

46:22 It doesn't tell you how much money to spend on advertising, but it tells you how to think about what, how much I need to do and for whom and how do I evaluate things and how do I measure things.

46:32 And so I'm I'm really proud of the work and I'm I'm, you know, I'm super fortunate that I still, today a few years later get notes from people about how much it's helped them.

46:43 I get a lot of comments like, were you in my last board meeting or boy, you should have sat in my sales like you were in the room with me and my sales executive and it's because, you know, a lot of the things that I talk about are really common challenges and I've experienced them firsthand and here's how I tackled it in the things that I've learned along the way.

47:03 The good stuff.

47:03 I share some you know bad experiences and what I'll never do again.

47:07 And also some things that did work well.

47:09 Oh jolly good, I gotta agree with you that I wrote a book, it's up there behind me and you're right, it really does concentrate your thinking on what you've done and what you should be doing so much so that both my sons read my book and I have one son in Africa and one here. I happen to be complaining one day.

47:27 And the son that lives in Canada said dad why don't you read your own damn book and listen to that.

47:33 Shut me up very quickly you know, so we'll soon be getting towards the end of our time.

47:39 And I have a couple of questions for you.

47:40 But the first one I want to ask you is looking ahead.

47:44 We are worried about recession, we're worried about all sorts of things.

47:48 I say worried, we have concerns, I'm not worried, any worries are negative, there are concerns about possible recession, unemployment.

47:56 And and on that one there's this strange situation where we have skilled people who can't find jobs and we have in our little town every coffee house and service, retail service place we're hiring signs on the door, they can't get enough people to serve coffee.

48:12 So there are concerns looking ahead.

48:16 Is there a sort of little nugget of advice you would have for small to medium-sized business owners what they should really be thinking about looking ahead for two years?

48:25 Yeah, I think it's a really excellent question and I think it is absolutely the reality.

48:30 And I think the advice that I give people is to focus on profitability.

48:36 We often focus on growth and growth is a meaningful and rewarding thing to focus on.

48:42 But in times like this, when things are tough, when we're done, things are uncertain when there's a lot of change going on, profitability is key because it will fund whatever you have to do next.

48:51 And so I really encourage people to think very carefully about that and help use that to drive the decisions that they're making about what, what they do next and at what pace.

49:04 And that will provide them some security for what needs to happen.

49:09 I also, the other thing that I tell people all the time.

49:12 This isn't my area of expertise, but it's an area of observation that I've made which is, we are always looking for people to fill open positions and things that have a very specific profile and background and resume and I understand the legacy of that.

49:27 I've done that myself very much when I've hired people in the past, but we are in a learning space society today.

49:36 And so it is more critical than ever to look at cultural fit and a person's ability to adapt because it's going to be hard to find them even with you know, big recession and layoffs of certain kinds of rules.

49:50 It's hard to find the perfect fit.

49:52 It's hard for people to fit in there.

49:53 So don't rule out really interesting people with talent because they don't fit, they're not coming up on your keyword search of the resume that they've sent over to you.

50:05 Yeah there was a bit of sage advice way back and this must have been in a business book I read 30 years ago, I can't remember who wrote it and he said if he wants to employ good people he takes attitude over aptitude every time.

50:21 Right.

50:21 Which is sort of what you're saying.

50:22 Here's another important one that I'd like to ask all are really successful guests and you're certainly in that category.

50:29 Samantha with your wide experience in the corporate world and in your own business and just talking to people in general, is there one characteristic mindset or habit that sets the successful and I don't just mean acquiring wealth?

50:43 I mean achieving a contented life and a balanced life and being relatively well off.

50:48 Is this something that sets these people apart from the average who remain frustrated and stressed and never really make it or is it more complicated?

50:57 I do think it's complicated, but I do think there's a couple of things that have been successful for me and I've observed a lot of people that find success and balance, which, you know, we often think success equals financial success and that certainly has been part of my success, but it's not the only thing, when I founded my own business, a big part of my mission was to make as much money as I made before, but to live a much more contented life and in fact I make more money than I made before and live a much more contented life.

51:25 So those things can happen, but as my Children are now becoming adults, I don't actually need to make as much money as I made before.

51:34 You know, I can dedicate myself to others things, not that I'm willing to give up a paycheck, let's not get crazy, But what that means for us and I think there's two things that I've seen is smart is constant goal setting.

51:48 So the right kinds of goal setting is really instrumental to whether you're an individual person or an organization and we want to create behavior and kind of things.

51:58 So I think goal setting is something we don't spend enough time on, we go, oh, there's a revenue number, that's our goal, but it's way more complex than that and, and way more opportunity than that.

52:08 The other thing is something that I practice a lot, which is being uncomfortable.

52:12 If you want to be successful in today's world, you have to be good at getting uncomfortable.

52:17 And one of the ways that I did that to support my professional life was something I actually do in my personal life.

52:24 So every year and I've now done this for many, many years is I take on a new hobby and my goal and taking on the new hobby is not to be master any new skill.

52:37 In fact, I'm truly terrible at most of the hobbies that I take on.

52:41 But that is in fact, the point, the point is to be uncomfortable doing something new and to continue to be learning something new even if I never master it.

52:50 And that has served me well and part of why I started doing that was when my Children were younger, they exhibited some of this thing, I don't know if you just look at my human nature, it would be, I don't like doing things I'm not good at, I like to be good at things and I am reticent to do things I'm not good at and one of my Children in particular when they were, you know, 10, 11, 12 years old trying new things, they just didn't, they shared that character with me and I found myself being like, I have not set a good example and so we would have this kind of, you just need to try and they look at me, okay, so I started doing this hobby thing as a way to sort of prove out and showcase uncomfortableness.

53:34 And it impacted my work and way more than I thought it would.

53:38 And it has made me, I think far more successful because I can experiment and try things where that I would have been hesitant to do in the past.

53:47 And experimenting and trying and letting go more than I might have done before has allowed my business to evolve.

53:53 I'm doing similar.

53:55 As I was when I started 10 years ago, but you know, the actual work I do and how I do, it has definitely shifted.

54:03 Good.

54:04 So you got to tell our audience, what's the latest hobby?

54:06 What's this year's hobby?

54:07 Yes, that's a good question.

54:09 I don't, I don't actually know what I'm going to do this year.

54:11 So it always falls to be somebody doing January in February, something will happen that in, you know, like just hits me over the head last year.

54:19 I did ice cream making because I got an ice cream maker as a present from someone.

54:23 I did that one year, I did sculpture because my son was really interested and we took a sculpture class together.

54:30 So a whole another story showing up with your preteen child to a sculpture class and there's a naked woman who's there.

54:38 He was calmer about it than I was.

54:41 I give him incredible press.

54:42 He was so good about it and it was meant to be artistic, but it was, I was not, I was not prepared his mom.

54:49 let's get that very proud of my child who didn't, who handled it absolutely wonderfully.

54:54 But so I use sculpture.

54:56 I've done cake, denigrating, I've done kayaking, I've done yoga, I've done painting, I've done so many things, so I'm not sure what 2023 will be, but it will fall on me in the next, in the next bit and we'll We'll give it a try and be terrible, terrible, terrible at it and be able to laugh at myself and you never know some of the things I tried to stick most of them don't.

55:21 But occasionally something comes on.

55:23 I did yoga one year as my new practice and I still practice this now 15 years.

55:28 Excellent.

55:29 I got to tell you that having been told as a junior school pupil many years ago that I would be absolutely useless at music and never be able to play or read music, at the age of 67 I needed a goal.

55:43 I went and bought a guitar and taught myself to play music..

55:47 I'm not good.

55:48 But the same.

55:49 I've done very similar to lots of other things that have made me really starting a podcast when we first started this was scary, but we love it.

55:58 It's really good.

55:59 Right?

56:00 So we are running low on time.

56:02 Samantha, can you tell our audience how they can contact you?

56:07 Absolutely.

56:08 I would love that.

56:08 And I actually have a course that I just launched that I've put in place that sort of teaches a lot of the things we've been talking about, finding and this is about sort of that some of that trends around self-paced learning and things.

56:18 So I hope people check it out, but if they go to unleash possible dot com where they want to check out the book the course, just who I am or just say hello.

56:26 They can go directly to unleashpossible.com.

56:28 You can schedule talk time directly on my calendar from there.

56:31 You could just check out some of the content, connect with me on LinkedIn of course.

56:35 I love meeting new people because part of why I still practice in my consulting is I'm better at giving advice and strategy when I see other businesses and what they're doing and learning along the way and what they're struggling with.

56:47 So I love a good talk therapy with someone, I'm happy to do it any time.

56:52 Excellent.

56:53 Excellent.

56:54 Well we really appreciate that.

56:55 Yes, it's been an absolute pleasure having you on the show today, Samantha and once again, thank you all so much for tuning in.

57:02 And of course, we welcome your suggestions for the type of expert guests you would like us to interview here on the show, feel free to reach out to either Peter or myself.

57:12 All you need to do is visit the Yakking Show dot com and click on the contact page.

57:16 We would love to hear from you until next time.

57:18 Take care everyone.

57:19 Bye bye bye.